

Ms. Olsen,

In response to your offer allowing me to make a statement concerning the now almost 11 year old charge of Online Solicitation of a Minor, I offer the following statement.

To Whom It May Concern:

In May of 2008 I traveled to Bryan Texas to meet someone with whom I had been chatting in a Yahoo Adult Chat Room. The person with whom I was chatting was an undercover officer with the Bryan Police Department posing as a teenage girl.

First, my response is in no way an attempt to vindicate myself or blame someone else for my actions. I alone chose to involve myself in those chat room sessions where suggestive photos and sexual conversations occurred. I accepted responsibility for my choices and behaviors and accepted a plea agreement offered by the Brazos County District Attorney and was sentenced to 7 years in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. As a condition of my plea and sentencing agreement I was also ordered to register as a Sex Offender for a period of 10 years after my release. I served 3 years and 8 months in prison before release upon parole in April of 2013. As a condition of my parole I attended weekly therapeutic sessions as a participant in a licensed Sex Offender Treatment Program for 3 years and 4 months until the discharge of my sentence in August of 2016. During this time I took and passed three separate polygraph examinations monitoring my behaviors and actions while on parole. I attended approximately 170 weekly group counseling sessions as required. While state-mandated, it was my responsibility to pay for the polygraph exams at \$225 each and \$35 for each weekly session for the duration of my treatment regimen.

That was then...this is now.

This is the most important part of my story. I determined my life would not be defined by my failure. Rather I want my life to be defined by how I responded to my failure. As a former church leader, the immediate shame and guilt brought upon the God whom I love and serve and those who cared for me deeply was excruciating. The reality I had let so many people down by involving myself in activities both immoral and illegal was a daily reminder of the severity of my actions. While there is no “primary” victim in my case, there are a multitude of family members and friends who were wounded deeply by the choices I made. I have learned well the fact that choices have consequences. While in prison I chose to invest in the lives of young men by offering encouragement, spiritual guidance and real-life help through tutoring men attempting to obtain their GED. After the mandatory waiting period upon my release, I applied for and passed the training to become a state-approved volunteer with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. I now return as a volunteer with several faith-based ministries to demonstrate that there is hope for a chance to live freely and with integrity after release from prison.

The most significant part of my story involves my family and the support system into which I was released following my incarceration. Mine is a story of the redemption, restoration and healing of the same God I have served for most of my adult life. My family and friends never excused my behavior. However, they consistently demonstrated the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ as they walked with me through the challenges of re-entry into society. I am grateful for the network of support and the accountability provided by those who love and care deeply for me.

Respectfully,

Joe Barron